



Dear Friends,

This is a general update on our progress to date and how you can join us in identifying and addressing items of interest to seniors and those who care for them. For more information, you might want to refer to previous articles, postings on our web site at [www.helpingseniorsofbrevard.org](http://www.helpingseniorsofbrevard.org) and other available resources.

Helping Seniors has identified a major need in Brevard for a county aging plan. In 2012, the Brevard Commission on Aging conducted a workshop that resulted in a 140-page compilation of pictures and statistics, but no plan. To make use of these valuable statistics, Helping Seniors has formed a task force of 43 people who will advocate for seniors and develop an aging plan for Brevard County. We have held four meetings, selected a template for the plan and will eventually present our work to the County Commissioners. If you want to help, please contact Kay, our Information Specialist, at 321-473-7770. We are now collecting information and would appreciate your completion of the survey online at [www.helpingseniorsofbrevard.org](http://www.helpingseniorsofbrevard.org). This survey is also presented here in Senior Scene Magazine on page 41.

One of our major tasks is to develop an endowment to help seniors meet needs they can't afford or resolve through other nonprofit agencies. For example, we heard of a couple who were

living on \$796 a month and \$350 in food stamps. The husband could not eat because his dentures did not fit nor did he have the money to replace them. Our Board of Directors decided to use endowment funds to pay for his dentures. Now the man is able to eat. A small use of funds, but very necessary, as only one other resource would have possibly paid for the dentures. At this point our endowment is in its infant stages and only capable of meeting small needs on a limited basis, but we will grow and have already started receiving donations.

Why is this important? Well, current nonprofit and government organizations do not have the

resources to remedy such situations in a timely manner. The lack of a county aging plan with identified needs and the funding to pay for such needs is important. Did you know the county builds its budget with no knowledge of the economic impact seniors have on Brevard? The Commission on Aging doesn't know their economic impact either, but 22% of Brevard's population is over 65 years of age. In 2002 Brevard County was identified as an elder friendly county. When seniors receive no direct budget line item yet children receive 44.6% of the tax dollar, it becomes difficult to say we are an elder

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## Loaner Amplified Telephones Available for the Hearing Impaired

The Space Coast Center for Independent Living, Inc. is an area-wide nonprofit agency that provides a host of services to people with disabilities. They offer a free program for loaning specialized equipment to Florida residents who are deaf, hard of hearing, speech-impaired or totally voiceless. Phones with volume and tone controls increase your ability to communicate on the telephone and will increase your independence and enjoyment in using the telephone.

The Florida Telecommunications Relay's (FTRI) is a statewide nonprofit organization funded by a monthly surcharge on all landline telephone lines in Florida. The FTRI Regional Distribution Center (RDC) loans hearing assistive devices without charge to Florida residents who have a hearing disability. Equipment includes speaker and cordless telephones, text telephones (TTY's), amplifiers, ringers, and captioned telephones that enable a hard-of-hearing person to communicate on the phone.

Carol Hamblin, FTRI Program Specialist, at the RDC, said they have distributed equipment to people of all ages – grandparents thrilled to hear a grandchild on the telephone, teenagers excited to phone their friends and to 100-year old clients who want to be involved and communicate with friends and family. "It amazes me how this equipment can make such a big difference in someone's life", she remarked.

If you are a Florida resident and have trouble hearing on the phone, call FTRI to make an appointment to receive a free amplified telephone.

Call FTRI at 321-632-9114. FTRI is located at 571 Haverty Court, Suite W, Rockledge. **SS**

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friendly community.

Yes, development of an aging plan will require new funding or some shifting of current assets so that seniors receive major financial support. And, I do not mean cash infusions to established nonprofits who already operate close to a 50% margin in revenue and expenses. It is time for the County Commissioners to require a new look at what we are getting for our buck! Funding resources are changing and it makes sense to start looking at nonprofits who are doing a cost effective job. Failure to do so will only result in new unmet needs as baby boomers enter the picture in increasing numbers. Already, Brevard is the 24th oldest county nationwide in terms of the number of those over the age of 65. It is time to rethink our modus operandi.

*Joe Steckler is the President of Helping Seniors of Brevard, a nonprofit organization designed to advocate, educate, and fundraise on behalf of Brevard's senior citizens. Feel free to contact us at: info@helpingseniorsofbrevard.org or calling: 321-473-7770 ~ www.helpingseniorsofbrevard.org. **SS***

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